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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 23, 2020

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND FIRST LADY ESHLEMAN LAUNCH THEIR HALLMARK CITYWIDE YOUTH INITIATIVE – “MY CHI. MY FUTURE.”**

**CHICAGO** – At a citywide virtual youth summit today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and First Lady Amy Eshleman launched “[My CHI. My Future.](#)” (MCMF) – a multi-year, youth-focused initiative designed to connect youth across Chicago to meaningful out-of-school experiences, and ensure all Chicago youth have a meaningful plan for the summer. The MCMF family of more than 200 organizations, has been designing the initiative, with a focus on organizing and connecting the opportunity ecosystem in Chicago and galvanizing caring adults, all over the city, to ensure that every young person has a plan for summer engagement.

“Every young person in Chicago deserves to explore their passions in youth-centered, out-of-school experiences,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “Access and participation in Chicago’s diverse out-of-school opportunity ecosystem must be equitable, resulting in all young people leveraging community assets and the city’s resources to build positive futures for themselves and their communities.”

While the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the original implementation of the “My CHI. My Future.” initiative, many out-of-school experiences will now be available through a hub online at [mychimyfuture.org](http://mychimyfuture.org). The content on the MCMF website is different than what youth may be doing or seeing through remote learning through their school and will include:

- Live Events – real-time offerings that are interactive and have a connective element
- Virtual Experiences – taped offerings that take youth to another place
- Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Activities – things that youth can do at home alone or with family
- Challenges – activities that have a competitive aspect to them
- For-Youth-By-Youth – activities that youth have created and curated for each other
- Gaming – interactive, game-like activities



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“Despite the pivot to protect the health and safety of all Chicagoans, there is still a vital role for MCMF to play both in helping youth connect to the content being created by out-of-school partners and in being a hub of rich resources that partners, and caring adults, can draw upon in their engagement of youth,” said the City’s Deputy Mayor for Education and Human Services, Dr. Sybil Madison.

The website also includes content that taps into what youth need now, including music and art opportunities, virtual jobs for teens, and mental health supports. [Headspace](#), a global leader in mindfulness and meditation announced that they have teamed up with the MCMF initiative to offer free meditation and mindfulness content for Chicago youth as a digital mental health resource for young people to help manage anxious thoughts, build mental resilience and navigate through this uncertainty in hopes to spark and sustain interests and drive passion projects. Starting today, Chicago youth across the city can access a specially curated collection of science-backed, evidence-based guided meditations, along with at-home mindful workouts and sleep content to help address rising stress and anxiety on the MCMF website.

“We are committed to ensuring all youth are connected to meaningful opportunities this summer,” said First Lady Eshleman. “While these uncertain times have changed our day-to-day activities in so many ways, the one thing that will not change is our dedication to the youth of this city – and their futures.”

The website is also intended to be used by parents and caregivers who can use it to find “extracurricular” activities for youth to plug into while they are still mostly sheltered at home and engaging in remote learning. As the city moves out of sheltering in place, MCMF will expand the current catalogue of experiences to include any in-person programs that are available, including those provided by the Chicago Park District, the Department of Family Support Services, the Chicago Public Library, and other city departments.

MCMF has come to fruition through the combined efforts of government, community, academic, philanthropic and corporate input through programmatic, digital and financial support. Northwestern University’s Office of Community Education Partnerships has been an integral partner in the MCMF initiative, creating the infrastructure for MCMF by designing a versatile platform for in-school, out-of-school and online learning. More than a search tool, the platform is an essential part of an educational ecosystem.

"Mayor Lightfoot has made Chicago a model for solutions to urban challenges around the world and become a national leader with decisive action to protect her city and its citizens. It is no surprise that she and First Lady Amy Eshleman are



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breaking down barriers to equity in education, even as the pandemic exacerbates longstanding disparities," Northwestern University President Morton Schapiro said. "We are honored to be part of this unprecedented collaboration and to serve Chicago's youth during the crisis and beyond."

Faculty and student researchers at DePaul University are documenting the process, analyzing the impact of the initiative, and creating a framework that supports data-informed, community-driven conversations among youth program providers about their local learning infrastructure and how to transform it to be more equitable and responsive to youth interests. Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Chicago is also supporting the community-level work for MCMF.

"DePaul University has been deeply engaged with the city of Chicago for more than a century and this extraordinary citywide initiative of Mayor Lightfoot provided us an opportunity for faculty and student researchers from the College of Computing and Digital Media to apply their expertise in supporting an informal out-of-school learning ecosystem. We already have seen the excitement among community organizations to use this data to connect the city's youth with meaningful opportunities that match their passions and interests," said A. Gabriel Esteban, Ph.D., president of DePaul University. "This collaboration extends our mission of providing access to enriching programs throughout the classroom that is Chicago."

Also, one of the leading community organizations for MCMF is Project Exploration, which has directed the initiative's work in the Austin neighborhood.

"Project Exploration has been pleased to partner with the Mayor's Office to support the My CHI. My Future. initiative in the Austin community. We recognize the importance of connecting children and youth to out-of-school opportunities, especially things that they are interested in learning more about. Austin's ecosystem, which includes program providers, our CPS Network leadership and principals, our faith community, police district, and many others have been strategizing about how we together keep our youth engaged and safe," said Natasha Smith-Walker, Executive Director, Project Exploration.

Lastly, philanthropic and corporate partnership has included the Polk Bros. Foundation and Bank of America, whose support will be directed towards youth in the Back of The Yards community to assist them in exploring their passions and possibilities that set them up for success.

"My Bank of America colleagues and I are honored to support First Lady Amy Eshleman and Deputy Mayor Sybil Madison as they bring to life their vision for My CHI. My Future.," said Paul Lambert, Chicago market president for Bank of America.



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“MCMF is mobilizing organizations that, like Bank of America, are deeply committed to ensuring the next generation of Chicagoans are connected, engaged and empowered to harness their talent and rewrite their futures. This type of city-wide collaboration is the key to economic mobility, and we’re proud to stand with the individuals and organizations that are working toward this important goal.”

"It's more important now than ever before that young people have opportunities to develop their interests and talents, and to feel connected within their communities," said Polk Bros. Foundation Program Director for Education Suzanne Doornbos Kerbow. "We're pleased to support My CHI. My Future. as they bring together City departments and community-based organizations to learn from each other and develop new ways of engaging and supporting Chicago's young people."

Another philanthropic partner, the Lefkofsky Family Foundation has supported the “My CHI. My Future.” initiative in the Garfield Park community, ensuring that all students have an opportunity to explore new and different experiences on their path for success.

“The Lefkofsky Family Foundation is committed to ensuring that there are no barriers along a student's chosen path for success,” said Liz Lefkofsky, executive director of LFF. “Through our Success Bound Initiatives, we know that the biggest barrier is often access to opportunity to varied experiences. Now more than ever before, it’s important for our communities to come together and work to ensure that all youth are connected to meaningful and engaging opportunities. This city-wide collaboration is a commitment to Chicago's youth that the whole city is behind as they build a path forward.”

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